

## **GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

**Wednesday, May 12, 2010 – 6:00pm**

**Brown Recreation Center – 302 East Vandalia Road**

**PRESENT MEMBERS:** Rose Marie Ponton (Chair), Carl Brower, Jr (Vice-Chair), Marc Bush, Zach Crutchfield, Ken Free (dismissed 8:14), Lori Galbreath (dismissed 8:06), Robert Clay Hassard, Wesley Vaughn

**ABSENT MEMBERS:** Steve Moore

**STAFF PRESENT:** Steve Branson, John Hughes, Greg Jackson, Dan Maxson, Keith Morrison, Weesie Person, Marcie Richardson, Deborah Scales, Mike Simpson, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Gatehouse, Fat Tire Society

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at the Brown Recreation Center. Rose Marie Ponton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the April 14, 2010 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

### **Recognitions**

Brantley Craft, Eagle Scout, was unable to attend and will be recognized during a future meeting.

### **Brown Recreation Center Presentation**

John Hughes, Youth and Community Programs Manager, introduced Keith Morrison, Brown Center Director.

Morrison informed Members of events and programs currently held at the center.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Revised Budget Reduction Scenarios**

Greg Jackson, Director, stated that last month the Commission was presented with proposed 3% budget reduction Scenarios for Parks and Recreation. Staff identified priority services, explored vacancies that could be eliminated, explored a variety of programs and the impact of eliminating those programs. Jackson then turned the presentation over to Division Director's.

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, reported that 28 comments were received this past month regarding the proposed reductions. Two citizens were in support of the proposed reductions and the proposed fee increases, the remaining 26 were in opposition. Maxson stated that 8 citizens were opposed to an individual fee verses a team fee in the athletics division which could possibly result in a decrease in participation leading to an increase in forfeits. Two comments opposed closing Lake Higgins. Fifteen comments were received opposed to eliminating the cultural outreach programs, 8 of the 15 were focused on the Chinese New Year Festival, 4 were focused on the African American Extravaganza. One citizen commented that they were opposed to an increase in fees at the dry dock storage at Lake Townsend.

### **Lake Higgins**

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, reported that staff was asked to revisit the Lake Higgins reduction and a multitude of items were discussed, such as exploring the option of Summerfield partnering with Greensboro Parks and Recreation, however not a feasible option at this time but possibly in the future. The recommendation is to open Lake Higgins for 2 days a week on Friday and Saturday, the most popular times to citizens. This would be an \$80,000+ savings. Cost for maintaining the facility and utilities would be needed. Operations of certain amenities and services would be relocated to Lake Brandt and Lake Townsend. Canoes and kayaks are currently allowed at Lake Higgins and would be relocated to Lake Brandt. Staff can only operate these services safely with 2 employees and with the reduction of staff Lake Higgins would only be able to operate with one

employee. Taking these services to Lake Brandt would allow an uninterrupted service and continue the revenue stream. As a result of a 2 day a week operation there would be an annual cost of \$4,900 for contract mowing and \$3,500 for utilities. This would include the elimination of 2 full-time positions. Citizens would continue to be able to launch their own boat. Hours of operation may have to be adjusted from 9:00am-7:00pm to perhaps 1:00pm-11:00pm to accommodate visitors late in the day.

#### Barber Park Sprayground

Wilson stated that there was discussion during the previous Commission meeting in regard to decreasing the number of staff originally projected for Barber Park. Instead of hiring lifeguards that would be utilized for crowd control and safety staff was asked to explore projections of having cashier. This would cost approximately \$1,000 for an operation that would operate 688 hours annually. At this time the recommendation is to maintain this facility with park attendants. There will be a facility supervisor who is a Certified Pool Operator which is required by law and is someone who can monitor the chemicals, currently this is the park manager. A lifeguard is not required.

Wilson stated that attendance would likely range 64-72 people; however never operating a sprayground in the past an accurate figure can not be given.

Carl Brower, Jr, Member, stated that he believes participation will be higher. Brower does not support eliminating the entry fee when having to make budget reductions. This Commission previously voted and agreed that a \$1 entrance fee is appropriate. The projection for the revenue stream is less than half of the operating cost. Brower does not support hiring a lifeguard.

Ponton inquired if there would be concessions and what is the sprayground capacity limit.

Wilson replied stating yes and the concessions will be contracted out. The capacity limit is 160.

Wesley Vaughn, Member, inquired if someone will monitor the capacity.

Wilson replied stating yes, it is a requirement to monitor the capacity and have someone controlling the gate.

Marc Bush, Member, inquired if an adjustment can be made after 6 months to charge or not charge an entrance fee.

Jackson replied stating that by the time the participation numbers are known, then post the information, and go through the approval process summer would be close to an end; therefore would have to plan the change for the following year.

Clay Hassard, Member, stated that since this is a unique facility he feels it will draw a large crowd. Hassard supports an entry fee.

Wilson stated that he is hopeful that there will be additional revenue through picnic shelter rentals.

Jackson stated the Health Department does not require lifeguards if there is no standing water and they do not require fencing.

Brower inquired about the history of renting shelters at Barber Park between Memorial Day and the end of August.

Wilson replied stating all shelters have been reserved every Saturday through September. The new shelters and amenities have attracted more patrons.

Brower stated that with the shelters reserved through September for family and group activities allowing for an influx amount of children and older people who might like to use the sprayground which validates his earlier point about the usage projections.

Vaughn stated that it doesn't seem to be an added expense to have someone collecting an entry fee because they are already an employee. Vaughn believes that 90% of the time the facility will probably not approach the 160 capacity limit unless on a weekend.

Ponton recommended charging a fee for one month as a trial.

Jackson stated that if an entry fee is charged additional staff would be needed and the facility would be held to a higher standard. When it is free of charge there is not that level of responsibility. For example, if there is a charge to a dog park staff has a higher level of care; however if it is free ownership is completely on the people at the facility.

Brower stated that any facility the city operates has the same standard liability and there would be rules and regulations; therefore what other level of care would be needed.

Jackson replied stating staff would have to make sure children are acting appropriately and by not charging a fee they would not have to be monitored.

Brower stated that the rules and regulations would be posted and the city would still be responsible just as if someone were to twist their ankle in a pothole on a trail.

Bush stated that if a fee is charged and someone has a complaint then there is the expectation of someone being there to immediately ask for a refund and easily ask for the issue to be resolved. If there is not a fee there is still someone there managing the facility that would be available for complaints however they would likely take their complaint to the Director because there was no one available who is getting paid to address concerns.

Jackson stated that if a fee is charged staff would have to return to the budget and possibly cut \$25,000-\$30,000 elsewhere in the budget because of the staffing levels originally projected.

Brower stated that he is basing his projections by physically seeing what goes on at Barber Park.

Zach Crutchfield, Member, inquired if traditionally spraygrounds charge a fee.

Wilson replied stating that some do not charge, however some do. It is like comparing apples to oranges whereas some facilities had amenities and others did not. A lot of spraygrounds included a pool.

*At this time Ponton took the prerogative to have Speakers from the Floor. Ponton requested that only one representative speak from each cultural outreach program.*

#### Speakers from the Floor

Ruth Revels, Guilford Native American Association representative, spoke in support of the Native American Festival and in opposition of eliminating the event. This would be the festival's 18<sup>th</sup> year. Revels requested Members to advocate for this organization. Funding from and collaboration with the City of Greensboro Parks and Recreation allows the opportunity for alternate funding, such as from the NC Arts Council.

Margaret L. Morris, President, Sigma Kappa Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, spoke on behalf of sorority members in support of the African American School Days Extravaganza and in opposition of eliminating the event. This organization has worked with and supported this program for 19 years. Morris emphasized the enjoyment this program offers children and may be their only means of learning about African American history and culture. Morris requested the Commission to support this program.

Marvette Artis, African American School Days Extravaganza volunteer, spoke in support of the African American School Days Extravaganza and in opposition of eliminating the program. Artis emphasized that this program is instrumental to cultural advancement and awareness in the Greensboro community. Artis requested the Commission to reconsider the proposed budget reduction of the cultural outreach programs.

Dr. Hong Wang, former Greensboro Chinese Association President, spoke in support of the Chinese New Year Festival and in opposition of eliminating this event. Wang has supported this event for 18 years. Wang presented the

Commission with a letter supporting the Chinese New Year Festival. This letter was submitted to the Mayor by the founding president of the Greensboro Chinese Association.

Deborah Scales, Cultural Outreach Coordinator, reported that the City of Greensboro provides \$4,100 to each of these organizations. These funds are used as leverage at attempts to receive grants and seek additional funding. In addition to the \$4,100 the city provides some printing, security, and some sound system. Accompanying the \$4,100 for each organization are membership and program dollars. These funds are allocated within each organizations budget and often exceed the city's \$4,100 contribution.

Brower inquired about the amount of \$63,000 stated on the distributed proposed budget reduction document for the cultural outreach programs.

Jackson replied stating that the figure reflects personnel costs, rental of equipment for the sound, the \$4,100, etc.

Hughes stated that staff knew this would be a controversial subject and knew it would be presented to the Commission as such and most likely to City Council. Over the years the funding for these programs has been cut. The attendance for these programs ranges from 7,000-10,000.

Brower inquired if a position would be eliminated.

Hughes replied stating one filled position would be eliminated and one vacant position would be eliminated.

Crutchfield inquired about the consultant services budget.

Scales replied stating that the consultant services budget is used for such things as a sound technician and sound system to accommodate outdoor events and required additional security.

#### War Memorial Stadium

Hughes reported that the proposed reduction for War Memorial Stadium in the amount of \$11,000 is budgeted for temporary services and has not been utilized in the past 2-3 years. Employees at the stadium maintain the facility.

#### Summer Playgrounds Program

The Summer Playground Program has been proposed in the past as a budget reduction and failed. This program will run this year for 7 ½ weeks. Twenty of 39 positions would be eliminated. Twelve positions would be filled by JobLink. The summer playground program is proposed to be eliminated following this year. The intent is to increase numbers at the summer day camps at the recreation centers. Registration would be raised from 60 camp slots to 90 or possibly 100. The twenty positions eliminated from the summer playground program would be placed at the day camps to accommodate the ratio of 15 to 1.

Brower inquired about transportation to the camps.

Hughes stated that would be the parent's responsibility. Scholarships would be provided; however not full scholarships.

Brower inquired how scholarships would be advertised.

Hughes stated that people would be informed of scholarships at the time of registration.

Jackson stated that marketing efforts for scholarships will be explored for next year. The purpose for eliminating this program is to increase attendance at the recreation center day camps which would provide a better quality program.

Brower sated that he is concerned that children would not be able to make it to the centers.

Hughes stated that the Westbury and Henry Street summer playgrounds program would be closed this year due to low attendance.

Ken Free, Member, inquired about the hours of operation at the summer playgrounds and at the recreation center camps.

Hughes stated that the recreation center hours are 7:30am-6:00pm and the playground hours are 9:00am-5:00pm. A positive to center camps is that there are no rain issues as the playgrounds.

Brower requested transportation to the center camps be explored.

Jackson informed Members that playgrounds were not being proposed to be eliminated this year due to not allowing enough time for participants to find an alternative plan.

Vaughn inquired if the scholarships are 100% funded by Parks and Recreation.

Hughes replied stating yes.

Brower asked what percentage of the camp fee would be scholarships.

Hughes stated for a \$60-\$70 fee the scholarship is normally \$35; however feels 50% would be fair.

#### Administration Budget

Maxson reported that Parks and Recreation improvements (sidewalk, road, etc.) are funded through the Parks and Recreation budget. There is a line item in the administration budget of approximately \$18,000 to cover such expenses. The consultant services line item funds studies at the direction of the City Manager's Office or perhaps City Council. The administration budget has absorbed study costs and would be unable to do so in the future. Both of these items are proposed budget reductions.

Brower inquired if staff would now be responsible for conducting studies.

Maxson stated if asked to complete a study staff would have to locate funds within the department that could be reallocated.

#### Position Reductions

Maxson stated that in addition to the reductions presented there are a number of others. Several full-time vacancies would be eliminated – 1 crew member position at Gateway Gardens, 1 full-time administrative position at Gateway Gardens, 1 full-time maintenance position at Bryan Park, 1 part-time benefited maintenance position at Bryan Park, and several seasonal and temporary positions across the department. This totals over \$200,000. This would create additional work for remaining staff; however staff is fortunate that the positions are unoccupied. The positions at Bryan Park were vacated this spring, the Gateway Garden positions have never been filled, and the seasonal positions are a mix of vacancies that have been vacant for some time.

Brower inquired if the vacancies at Bryan Park will affect any of the programs and activities.

Maxson replied stating not the leisure programs. The impact will be with the maintenance of the soccer fields and the park area where the picnic shelters are located. It will be difficult for staff but manageable.

Jackson added that there 4 remaining positions for Gateway Gardens.

Bush stated that Bryan Park hosts major activities for this city.

Jackson stated that the eliminated positions in all scenarios total 7 full-time positions 13 temporary positions.

Brower expressed concern that tournaments and other programs at Bryan Park may relocate if not maintained as well as it has been in the past. Events at Bryan Park produce revenue to the city as well as recognition.

Brower also stated that with the increased numbers of participation due to the economy the Commission has an obligation to inform City Council of the increased burden in providing services to the city, not only recreation, but

cultural and education aspects and economic benefits the city derives from these services.

Lori Galbreath, Member, stated that she could not support the proposed budget reductions as an entirety due to the proposed elimination of the cultural outreach programs. This targets 3 different cultures of people which make up a huge population in Greensboro.

Free stated that he is hesitant eliminating the summer playgrounds, but would approve it.

Brower stated that he does not support eliminating the cultural outreach programs, not charging a fee at Barber Park, and the elimination of summer playgrounds.

Ponton encouraged the cultural outreach program supporters to take their concerns to City Council. There will be a City Council meeting June 1, 2010 that will include a public hearing to receive comments on the proposed budget.

Brower stated that every City Council meeting has speakers from the floor to give anyone the opportunity to voice concerns. Brower encouraged everyone with concerns to contact their City Councilperson. The next City Council meeting will be held May 18, 2010.

Jackson stated that Deborah Scales has met with the 3 cultural outreach groups and made suggestions on alternate funding opportunities that may be available to each group. Staff can meet again with these groups and have further discussions.

Crutchfield stated that the elimination of the summer playgrounds this year could perhaps allow for the continuation of the cultural outreach programs. The elimination of the summer playgrounds would still offer an alternative to utilize the recreation centers. There is not an alternative with the elimination of the cultural outreach programs.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Marc Bush and seconded for the Commission to accept and recommend City Council approval for the proposed budget reductions. Ayes: Bush, Vaughn, Hassard. Noes: Brower, Crutchfield, Free, Galbreath, Ponton**

#### **Proposed Fee Adjustments**

Maxson reported that last month the Commission was presented with fees that would increase our revenue generation by \$115,000. Maxson then turned the presentation over to Wilson.

Jackson informed the Commission that this scenario is in lieu of the proposed reductions.

#### **Picnic Shelters**

Wilson reported that there were comments during the previous meeting regarding some of the increases; therefore staff re-visited the scenarios and conducted a market research on some items. A \$5.00 increase is being proposed for shelter rentals. This increase would put the department in an average with other municipalities in North Carolina and does not place the department out of the market.

#### **Gillespie Golf Course**

Wilson stated that twelve golf facilities were researched regarding Gillespie Golf Course fees. With a \$1.00 greens fee increase and \$.50 cart increase the fees would continue to remain the lowest out of the twelve par 3, 9 hole facilities that were researched.

Brower inquired how many of the courses researched were not par 3, 9 hole courses.

Wilson replied stating one was a 9 hole, the remaining were 18 holes at municipal and private courses. The current fee at Gillespie Golf Course is \$18.00 and would become \$19.50 with the cart fee as a result of the proposed increase. Winston Lake in Winston-Salem, NC is an 18 hole course and charges \$26 for greens and cart fees. There was a suggestion to add \$.50 to the driving range fee and basket fees. Staff researched 4 driving ranges and Gillespie

Golf Course would remain in the average. Renovations are taking place at Gillespie Golf Course that will include additional amenities.

#### Dry Dock Storage and Show Wagon

Wilson reported that staff researched dry dock storage facilities. Dry dock storage facilities for lakes are not abundant. The recommended annual increase is \$100. The department would continue to be below the lowest market research rate which was \$600.00. Belews Lake charges \$1700. The department's current dry dock storage fee is \$400.

Wilson reported that the original proposal for the show wagon rental requested that non-profits not to receive discounted rates. They currently receive a discounted rate of \$200. The original proposal consisted of non-profits paying the commercial rate of \$750. Based on discussions with coliseum staff who also offer a show wagon, the recommended proposal is a \$400 waiver which is a \$200 increase. The labor cost for an average event is \$650+. Also requested was a \$50 increase for the use of the generator.

Crutchfield inquired if the boat storage is at capacity and why not charge more for storage is at capacity.

Wilson replied stating they are at capacity with a waiting list of more than 50.

Jackson stated that staff is exploring options of boat storage expansion.

Wilson stated that half year rentals are currently an option.

Brower recommended increasing the boat storage fees to at least \$750-\$800 verses eliminating summer playgrounds where there are underprivileged children in neighborhoods who are unable to attend recreation center camps even with scholarships. Boat storage renters can afford these fees. This is a golden opportunity to raise more funds and explore alternatives elsewhere including the cultural arts programs.

#### Action Taken

**A motion was made by Brower and seconded to increase the dry dock storage rental fee to \$800.**

**Ayes: Brower, Crutchfield, Free, Ponton Noes: Hassard, Vaughn No Vote: Bush, Galbreath**

Bush asked for clarification that what has been proposed for 2 years is a net increase of \$4,100 for the show wagon.

Wilson replied stating the increase would be \$4,200. Reducing the non-profit rate from what was originally proposed decreased the revenue projection for the show wagon.

Bush stated that the dry dock storage is not a large revenue generator as there is not enough capacity.

Brower expressed concern that the department is charging less than half of what Belews Creek charges.

Vaughn expressed concern of increasing the fee from \$400-\$800 all at once. Just because someone has a boat does not mean they have access money and recommended charging \$700-\$750.

#### Athletic Fees

Hughes reported that during the last meeting Members were presented with proposed fee increases in adult sports. In place of subsidizing adult sports at a team rate of \$375-\$400 a suggestion was made to charge \$40 per person. Numerous complaints have been received regarding this option. Remaining at \$40 per person would be \$600 per team. This would allow for a \$30,000 increase in revenue. Staff recommends charging the individual fee of \$40.

Vaughn inquired if the projected revenue included reduction in participation.

Hughes replied stating that staff is aware of the potential reduction in participation and anticipates a reduction the first year but feels they will return.

Jackson added that other cities have tried this and it has been their experience that individuals return.

Brower stated teams may have sponsors to help absorb the cost verses individuals.

Vaughn stated that he agrees.

Hughes reported that most comments received are concerns with kick-ball and co-ed softball as sponsorships have decreased. The current fee is \$375 per team.

Maxson added that 2 citizen comments stating that if there are 15 players paying \$40 each would equal a \$600 team fee. Maxson quoted one comment saying “\$600 is a whopping increase”. An additional comment stated they could accept a \$425 team fee.

Jackson stated staff can recalculate costs to include expenses for field maintenance, lighting, etc. keeping in mind daylight games verses nighttime games and the usage of lighting.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Vaughn and seconded to tentatively change the individual fee to a team fee of \$600 with a \$600 cap until the projected figures are available. A vote in favor was unanimous.**

Brower inquired what the contractual obligations are with the Bryan Park golf facility as it relates to funds received.

Maxson replied stating that there is currently a contract in force for a couple of more years. Parks and Recreation pays Bryan Park \$125,000 a year to manage the facility which is much less than having the department manage it. There is a record of expenditures of these funds and all funds are utilized. The department has an operating budget for Bryan Park for ground maintenance as the department is responsible for infrastructure improvements and repairs. Any funds remaining from this budget goes to the general fund.

Bush inquired if the contract consists of revenue generated to be given to the city.

Maxson replied stating that Bryan Park golf pays the city \$45,000 a year to fund a maintenance person.

Vaughn inquired about tennis contracts.

Hughes stated that the contractors pay the city \$4,100 a month with an increase of 5% each year.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Bush and seconded to approve the fee increase proposals for Gillespie Golf Course, Farmer’s Market, Country Park, Barber Park, Hester Park, show wagon, Simkins Pavilion, and Sportsplex. A vote in favor was unanimous.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Action for Budget Process**

Jackson informed Members that the 2010-2011 budget will be presented May 25, 2010.

Brower stated that the meeting minutes and votes will speak for themselves; however recommended each Member contact the City Councilperson who appointed them.

Bush inquired if staff has been given the directive they need and will reductions be explored elsewhere.

Jackson stated that the recommendations have already been submitted to City Council.

All Members were in favor of submitting a letter to City Council stating their support and oppositions.



Brower requested that the increase in participation figures be given to City Council.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Trails**

Wilson introduced Mike Simpson, Watershed Parks and Trails Superintendent and Mark Gatehouse, Fat Tire Society.

Simpson informed Members that the trails division offers a 44 page trails book that is used as a guide to city-wide trails. This book is available at numerous retailers in Greensboro and city facilities.

Simpson reported that there are 42 trails in Greensboro totaling 93 miles. This is the most of any municipality in North Carolina. The network of trails offers paved greenways, natural surface trails, multi-use trails and greenways, mountain biking, and hiking. Simpson presented Members with a map of existing and future trails. Simpson invited Members to attend National Trails Day, June 5, 2010.

Simpson introduced Susan Thomas, Vice-President, Fat Tire Society.

Simpson turned the presentation over to Gatehouse.

Gatehouse informed the Commission that Fat Tire Society was founded in 1995. The motto for this organization is DREAM, Develop new trails, Ride, Enjoy, and Maintain. This organization is an advocacy to the cycling community to educate on responsible trail usage and focus energies in a positive manner. Fat Tire Society assists Parks and Recreation with trail planning, trail building, and trail maintenance.

Gatehouse reported that in 1994 there consisted of 10 miles of trails. Fat Tire Society has constructed 27.5 miles of trails. The Blue Heron trail is the most recent trail completed. Gatehouse presented Members with detailed information about the trails. Fat Tire Society would like to increase trails by 12 miles within the next 3-4 years.

## **ADDENDUM**

- NONE -

## **SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR**

Speakers from the floor were previously heard under Revised Budget Reduction Scenarios.

## **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Jackson informed Members that they will receive proposed facility locations for the June tour and to respond with any suggestions. Jackson distributed a 1947 Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission Annual Report that was found and purchased at a local used book store.

## **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

**Hassard** stated that WFMY aired a segment on the GYC Carnival.

**Bush** stated that what the Commission went through this evening is why this Board exists even though not everyone is in agreement.

**Brower** informed Members that he had the pleasure of representing Parks and Recreation at the Blues Festival which was very well attended. Brower commended organizers for their efforts with this event. This is another example of the importance of cultural arts.

**Vaughn** commented on how well the trails are maintained.

**Ponton** informed Members that she represented the Commission at the Aquatic Center groundbreaking ceremony.

With no further business Ponton adjourned the meeting at 8:42pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant  
Greensboro Parks and Recreation